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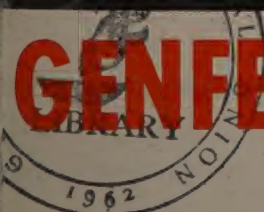
livingCity

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GENFEST '80

OVER 40,000 YOUNG PEOPLE
OF THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT MET IN ROME
FOR A MASS WITH THE POPE AND A FESTIVAL
THE THEME: "FOR A UNITED WORLD"



AUG 13 1980



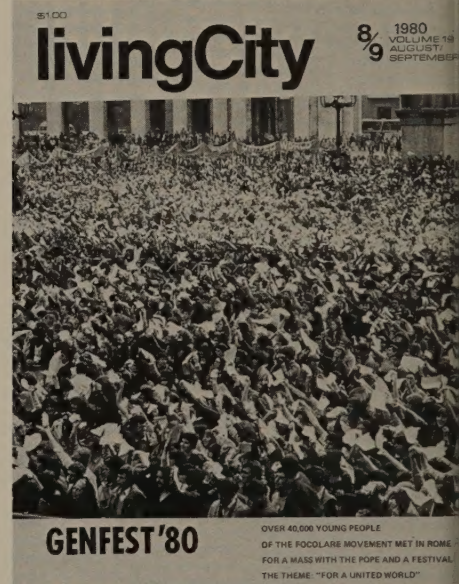
2 Continuing the series of articles on Igino Giordani, here Tommaso Sorgi concentrates in a particular way on his role in the birth and development of the "New Humanity Movement."



5 Through an interview, Igino Giordani's daughter, Bonizza, reveals another aspect of this extraordinary personality: that of being a wonderful, comprehensive father.

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GENFEST '80: Tens of thousands of young handkerchiefs are waved by the Gen to greet Pope John Paul II as he walked out on St. Peter's Square to celebrate Mass for participants of the Genfest.

We would like to call our readers attention to the fact that this issue of "Living City" is for August and September. The next number will be coming to you in October, 1980.

OTHER EDITIONS
OF THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT
MAGAZINE

CHINESE: "San Sing Seung Yuet Hong" - 70 Waterloo Road 11 B/F - Kowloon - Hong Kong

DUTCH: "Nieuwe Stad" - St. Stephanusstraat 11 - Nijmegen - Holland



GENFEST '80: Fifteen pages covering this momentous event, an historical step for the Gen Movement.



10 "MOMENT OF GOD:" The powerful message which Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement gave at the opening of the 1980 Genfest. The response of the listeners was immediate and enthusiastic.



20 The sermon which Pope John Paul II gave at the Mass on May 18th for the participants of the Genfest is printed in its entirety. "The Pope is happy to encourage you to go ahead along this way. . ."

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As promised, we are continuing the publication of articles concerning the life of Igino Giordani. He was a key figure in the foundation and development of the Focolare Movement. He died on April 18, 1980. For those who would like to know him better, the previous issue of "Living City" was dedicated entirely to him.

the inheritance he left us

by TOMMASO SORGI

Igino Giordani met the Focolare Movement in 1948 when he was a member of the parliament of the newly established Italian Government. He had already waged many a battle for the Faith and for a religious view of public life; his commitment in this field had caused him, in fact, to be ostracized professionally. His activity — as a journalist was already prolific with many writings on Catholic apologetics, which were aimed above all at the systematic expression of the social aspects of Christianity. He viewed Christianity as being intrinsically capable of generating political and social guidelines. In reading the Gospel, he avoided the two extremes which others often fell into: that of being very familiar with it intellectually, but in an abstract way on the one hand, and that of viewing it as containing merely an earthly messianic message on the other. Taken in its human-divine entirety, the evangelical message is the seed of a revolution — "the" revolution — which has upset history and which today continues to work for the most profound freedom of mankind.

In his numerous books which had already been published in that era, the basic concept was the link between the divine and the human, a link which was necessarily in the interest of mankind. The freedom and dignity of human beings have their origin in the acceptance of Christ in the life of peoples. As Giordani himself expressed it in his books and talks, if the acceptance of Christ is left "in the most remote recesses of one's conscience,"¹ or considered invalid intellectually, then it is unavoidable that the freedom and dignity of mankind drown in front of political absolutism and economic subjugation.

The main points which occupied his thinking were: freedom, juridically guaranteed for each person and association, equality, solidarity, social use of material wealth, the dignity of work, harmony between Church and State, the moral animation of public life and of economic activities, anti-militarism and pacifism on the international scale. His thought merits a thorough study and examination, even with regard to its later development. The core of his thought can be found in its guidelines which were

properly political and correctly situated in the history of Christian social thought. Even upon my first consideration, it seemed to me that his way of thinking was linked to the discussions of the Catholic Democrats who were the precursors of the "Rerum Novarum" (Encyclical issued by Leo XIII in 1891 on Catholic social doctrine), with a tendency to favor the French thinkers and perhaps in particular the libertarian concessions of Lacordaire and Montalembert.

This, therefore, was his position when he had the encounter which was to give an upward thrust to his life, a life already on its way to God.

In his diary he had recorded the anguish he experienced in seeing the inconsistencies between his own personal faith and his public life; he saw how frail a personal "mystical experience" could be, made futile by "failures in politics, literature and in social commitments."² He wrote of his distress at feeling powerless in fulfilling his own desire to "spread sanctity through a mere page of a newspaper (at that time he was editor of "Il Popolo"), "to spread sanctity from a corridor of useless footsteps" (the halls of Montecitorio³).

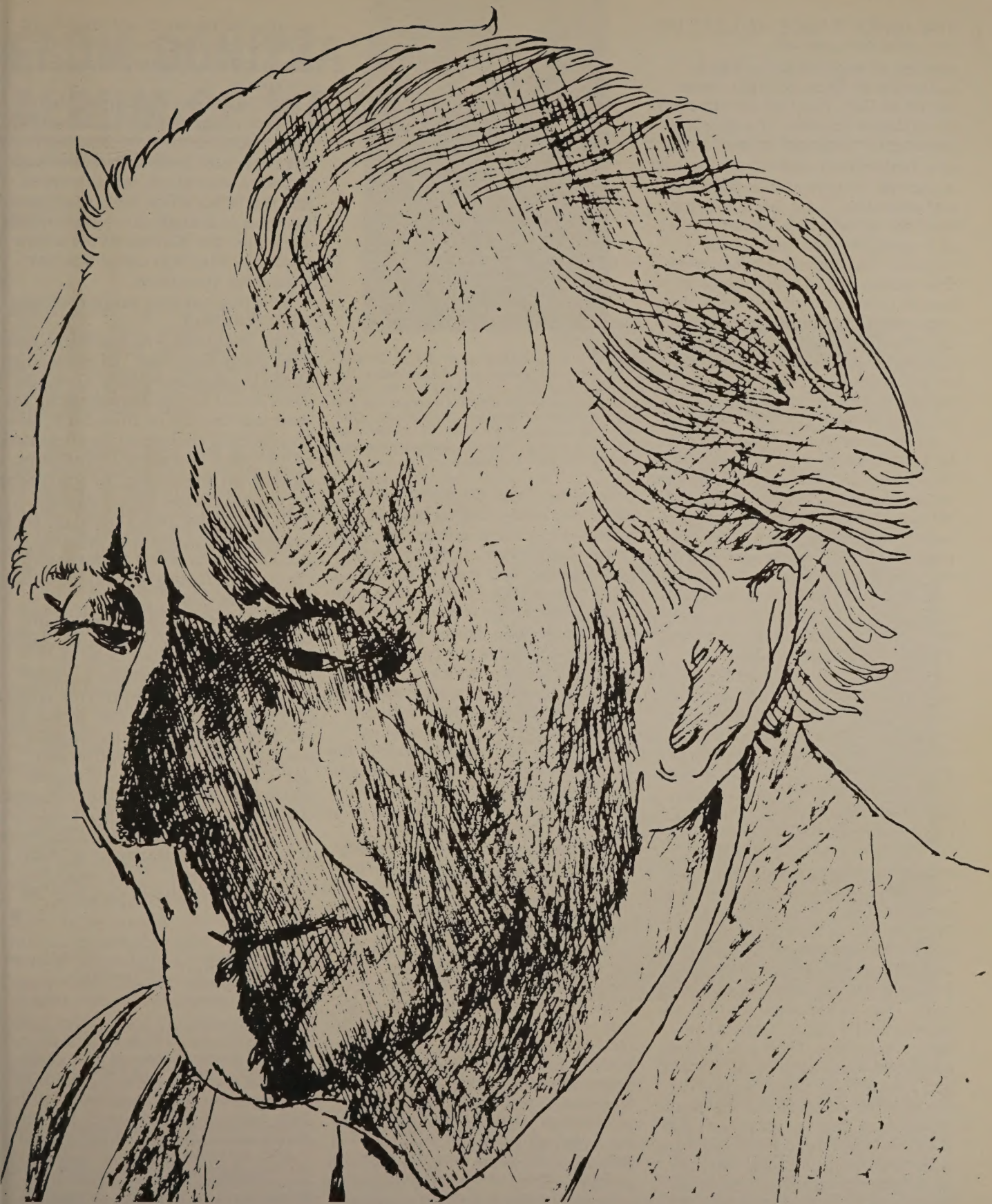
"Who will perform this miracle?" he asked himself in August of 1946.⁴

The answer to such anguish and to his question began to reveal itself from that providential "call."⁵ It gave him a way to relaunch his already ardent Christianity in a deeper way — more social and more divine. For him that encounter had been a meeting with a charism — the charism of the Focolare Movement. Since Giordani's soul had been nourished by a deep knowledge of the spiritualities of the Church, he understood this charism immediately in all of its vast dimensions and theological implications. He immersed himself in this phenomenon which was presenting itself to him and became an essential component in it. He was re-

Fiera di Primiero, 1959. Igino Giordani is pictured here with the other members of Parliament who gave life to the "Saint Catherine Center." From left to right they are: Tommaso Sorgi, Giordani, Enrico Roselli and Palmiro Foresi.



(continued on page 4)



Chiara Lubich sends her heartfelt thanks for the prayers and participation of many in the departure of our beloved Foco for the house of the Father.

THE INHERITANCE HE LEFT US

(continued from page 2)

minded of another era in which Catherine of Siena, a virgin consecrated to God, had had the strength to influence the lives of politicians in order to "heal and redeem an area of activity which, more than all others, is exposed to corruption, falsehood, and ambition."⁶ He felt a growing need for himself and for our times of a revival in some way of the spirit of "St. Catherine's followers." The spirituality of unity appeared to him to be an enormous source of energy, useful in society as well as in the Church, in order to "transform human society into a co-citizenship with the saints . . . so that grace may be introduced into politics, making it a tool of sanctity."⁷

In this way one of the fundamental contributions which Igino Giordani was to make in the development of the Focolare Movement matured. He helped the initial small group of people to become aware of the human efficacy of the charism which was manifesting itself.

Soon afterwards the Movement found ways to concretely introduce its life into the structures of society. The vocation of the "volunteers" was defined, and they began to work side by side with the community of consecrated people. The volunteers are people who exteriorly are immersed in the various fields of activities, while at the same time they are linked interiorly by the same ideal and by the mystical reality which they live together. They aim at bearing witness to the love of God and neighbor, which is the principle that renews interpersonal relationships in every field of practical life. As such they live within the existing structures without ignoring the harshness and disharmony around them and yet not accepting this situation passively. They go beyond these difficulties spiritually by suffering in the light of the Cross. Their goal is to redeem these structures in the present, and to humanize them inasmuch as it is possible as a service to the others. At the same time the volunteers give their contribution to all personal and collective, moral, cultural and political commitments, with a view towards a radical transformation of society itself.

To help carry out this work in a coordinated manner and to nourish it with both practical and theoretical



Giordani's friendship with Alcide De Gasperi (the first president of the Italian Republic) became the occasion of many meetings between this Statesman and the initiators of the Focolare Movement. After his first contact, he said, "I awoke this morning with a feeling of desperation; you have given me hope again."

reflections, Saint Catherine's Center came into being. During the 1959 Mariapolis at Fiera di Primiero, while people from every continent were consecrating their nations to Mary, Igino Giordani and a few other members of Parliament felt the need to "entrust to Mary, Queen of all peoples, their political commitment."⁸ It was this gesture which occasioned the opening of Saint Catherine's Center. It was not a purely devotional act: the strength of the Virgin of Nazareth, in fact, was also felt in the forcefulness of her political message, launched through the "Magnificat." "The Magna Charta of Christian social doctrine begins with the words of Mary: 'He has put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty handed' (Luke 1:52-53)."⁹

It was in God's merciful plan that I also be present with Giordani and the other members of Parliament, Roselli and Foresi. The project for this center was formed in the hands (and the heart) of Igino Giordani, to whom I had been introduced a few years earlier by some people in the Movement. I had met him in 1956 at Montecitorio where he, no longer a member of Parliament, had remained as librarian. I discovered him precisely along a "corridor of useless footsteps," not in all his brilliancy as apologist and polemist — as I had known him through his writing — but in the renewed gentleness and meekness of a prophet of love. This was

an unusual reality to attempt to introduce into that area which was characterized by antagonism and indifference.

St. Catherine's Center was born to work in the field of political life. Later, other centers were added for the particular fields of business and industry, education, social services and art. After a few years they came together in a single Movement which was called the Movement for a New Society; today it is called the New Humanity Movement.

This tree has now taken root on every continent.

The seed from which the tree was born lies in that "call" of September, 1948. In addition to what Giordani contributed to this Movement by his work and the life he lived for it, the Movement's vital lymph is attributed to his vision of a social Christianity. He worked and fought for this during his entire lifetime. He stood erect with the stature of a biblical prophet, against every attempt to separate faith from works and against every "murder of freedom," which would result from this.¹⁰

The Movement is left with a precious patrimony to be deeply examined, which is derived from his thought and his methods. I think that the way indicated by him is valid for the entire Christian world. It is a way born from his penetrating insights into the historical experiences of Christianity and from his well-balanced reading of the Gospels; it is a way far removed from both an overly simplistic faith and integralism. It is open to the search for a "rational collaboration"¹¹ between the two cities: the city of God and the city of man.

1) Igino Giordani, "The Two Cities," (own translation), Rome, 1961, p.332.

2) Igino Giordani, "Diary of Fire," (own translation), Rome: Citta Nuova, 1980, p.42.

3) Montecitorio is the name of the building which houses the Italian Parliament.

4) Igino Giordani, "Diary of Fire," p.38.

5) The author is referring to the call which Igino Giordani felt when he met the Focolare Movement. See "Living City," Vol. 19, no. 7.

6) Igino Giordani, "Christianizing Politics," (own translation), Rome, 1962, p.15.

7) Ibid., pp.19-20.

8) Chiara Lubich, "Three Dates," in "Christianizing Politics," op.cit., p.40.

9) Chiara Lubich, "Stirrings of Unity," (New York: New City Press, 1964), p.31.

10) Igino Giordani, "The Two Cities," op.cit., pp.338-340.

11) Igino Giordani, "The Christian Revolution," (own translation), Rome, 1969, p.70.

FROM BONIZZA'S ALBUM OF MEMORIES

by GINO LUBICH

Bonizza was the youngest of Igino Giordani's four children, and the only girl. As a child she suffered from poor health. Here we are publishing an interview with her shortly after her father's death.

"My earliest memories of my father are of our walks together. They are still very vivid in my mind. My father was a great one for walking, and from the time we were very small we used to take long walks with him.

"At that time we lived on Monte Zebio Street in Rome, and every day we would go for walks along the Tiber River. My father was an amusing sight to behold: he always walked with his hands clasped behind his back and his head in the air, his face to the wind — he always risked walking right into something, since he never looked where he was going.

"There is a great difference in age between me and my three brothers — Mario, Sergio and Brando — consequently, my childhood was all my own, and so was my relationship with my father. It was very special."

Bonizza was attached to her father. As his favorite, she used to sit on his lap and draw pictures when he worked at home in his study. She remembered, "At the same time, my brothers would be making an incredible racket, and in the next room my mother would be practicing her singing. My father would sit there, tranquil and serene, writing one page after the other, without ever complaining. I really think he liked the noise in our home and my mother's continual vocal exercises."

It was not only at home that Giordani managed to work under the most unreasonable circumstances. In the streetcar, as soon as he sat down he would begin writing. If an idea came to him while he was on the street — or anywhere, for that mat-

Bonizza's earliest memories go back to the long walks she used to take with her father. Here we see Igino Giordani with his young daughter at Villa Borghese, in Rome, during the war.



ter — even at an official luncheon, he would immediately note it on a scrap of paper, or on the back of a postcard, or in the margin of a newspaper. At those moments, he was entirely unaware of all that was going on around him. From those notes sooner or later discovered in all of his pockets, he would reconstruct the lucid thread of an article or the chapter of a book.

Bonizza, smiling, continued, "The same person who was such a well-orga-

nized librarian for the Vatican and for Parliament, for me was a wonderful, yet thoroughly unorganized person."

The two of them shared a secret — a make-believe person whose name was Catherine. She was Bonizza's imaginary little sister who would show up every time something threatened to rupture the perfect understanding between father and daughter.

"Catherine, Catherine," Giordani would call out. "Come here, because

Bonizza is worrying me!" Or if Bonizza had not done what she was supposed to do he would say to her, "It doesn't matter. I'll just call Catherine."

Bonizza knew very well that Catherine was imaginary, that it was all a game, and yet she was jealous of her. Catherine was her adversary; she became her conscience as well.

There are other memories, memories of long ago which are still very vivid for Bonizza. Summer vacations spent with her father; day trips to Tivoli or Guadagnolo to visit her uncles; or to Fregene where they went swimming. Recalling his swimming style she said, "He used to do the breaststroke, his arms flailing and his whole face showing the effort of breathing in and out. It was so funny. . . ."

There was also one very specific recollection of a certain trip: "I was in Cortina, because I had been very sick, and my father came to get me and bring me to Trent. This was in 1948, and in Trent I met Chiara and

the other girls who lived with her. They were much older than I, but I always remember them as young girls."

But more than particular episodes, Bonizza remembers the preciousness of her relationship with her extraordinary father. "I talked to him a great deal with the greatest confidence whenever he had a free moment. With him I had no inhibitions. He knew everything about me; more than being my father, he was my best friend. I even told him all about my first loves, and all the sentimental problems a young girl can have. He understood them and gave me advice."

Igino Giordani became the director of the Cabrini Institute and all the children attended school there. Bonizza recalled, "My three brothers first attended kindergarten and later spent several years at Cabrini in the elementary grades. They were three terrible rascals compared with all the other children. I think the Sisters must still tremble recalling their foolish pranks. They did everything un-

der the sun! They were also elated over their accomplishments. Brando came home one day and announced to my mother that he had gotten an 'A++.' It was an historic moment!"

As her brothers grew and went on to high school, the discussions around the dinner table with their father centered upon philosophy. Bonizza continued, "While other families talked about insignificant things at least at mealtimes, in my house we always discussed matters of great importance. I don't know how he did it, but my father seemed to have a magnetic force which managed to get us speaking about momentous problems. Since I was so little, it was very boring for me."

"For as long as I can remember, my father received Communion every morning. He never failed to leave the house at precisely 7:30 A.M. heading for the nearest church. But he always left us perfectly free to do as we wished, and completely respected our

Bonizza is seen here with her daughter Simona and her husband Giorgio Aragno, during her father's funeral.



choices in every regard. When we were choosing our various activities he never once suggested: "do this," or "do that." While in high school at Cabrini I decided that I really did not like humanities. I dreamed of becoming an artist. On the feast of the Epiphany my father gave me ten dollars. It seemed like a fortune to me and I used it to take some art lessons. Afterwards I took my sketches to my father to show him what I could do. I told him that I wanted to go to art school.

"This caused a great commotion in the family. First my mother said, 'No, you have to study humanities like your brothers. You can't leave a perfectly good school where all the Sisters love you and go to a public school.' Then there were my brothers who kept pushing the humanities because they would get me into a good university. The only one who supported me and let me make my own decision was my father. He even went with me to the art school to speak with the director. After taking an entrance exam I was admitted. There I met scores of people of all persuasions and with varied artistic whims as well. All of them met my father, and with great admiration, became his friends."

"There was yet another momentous occasion: he sent me to America when I was not yet eighteen years old. My mother and brothers were against this trip. 'Where does she think she's going? To America? Are we going crazy?'"

"My father knew a nun by the name of Sister Serafina who had written her graduate thesis on his books. She was a member of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill and had offered me a scholarship to study at this college. My father thought this to be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and although a bit apprehensive, he accompanied me to the ship and entrusted me to the captain. (I was still a minor.) Thus, for one year I was able to attend that beautiful art school. I was also able to spend a few months in Pittsburgh and New York where I saw the works of Pollock¹ and had my first real exposure to various art forms and other expressionists. While I was in America my father wrote to me every day and I still have all of those letters."



Igino Giordani with his son Brando at the age of eight. This picture was taken in Rome near Montecitorio.

"I married Giorgio Aragno with whom I had been in love since I was a young girl, and my father welcomed him with open arms. Even after we were married we spent all of our Sundays with my father. We usually went on cultural trips, but always ended up in a restaurant. After my mother died, I spent even more time with him — an entire month each summer, right up until last year. We took boat trips, walked along the riverbanks, met friends, and enjoyed ourselves. My father had a unique sense of humor. We always had a lively and cheerful relationship."

This is not to say that it was an idyllic relationship. Bonizza then continued, "I was aware of his political and cultural activities, and at times, I didn't approve of some of his decisions — even those having to do with religion. Some of them bothered me. I understand them better now that I am more mature, but at that time we discussed them very often, in a vigorous way, and he was very happy that I brought these prob-

lems to him. We were not easy children to raise; we were rebellious children, all four of us, and terribly argumentative. But this never detracted from the deep relationship with my father. We always loved one another a great deal."

Bonizza spoke at length about her father's political activities, particularly of his great hopes and also his many disappointments. "My father said that politics can be carried out in many ways and I think that he was a politician up to the last day of his life."

Bonizza has two wonderful daughters. Lara, the older one, was closer to her grandmother, whereas Simona, the ten-year-old, was very close to her grandfather. They played many games together, one of which was called "dictation." Seated in the living room, Simona would dictate to him whatever sentences came to her mind and he would write them with as many errors as possible in order to give her the great satisfaction of correcting them. Only once did he write them all correctly. In order to save the game, Simona put things straight. She gave him the grade of "onehundredwithhonors," written as one word.

We asked Simona which of her grandfather's words had left the deepest impression on her. She responded, "Those he said at the last Gen Convention. He said that our watchword was to always remain young."

One word alone, a name, has remained impressed in Bonizza's soul. "Near the end," she told us, "my father's words became always more significant. The last time he spoke with us he called me 'Catherine.' I thought that he was joking and referring to the imaginary rival from my childhood. 'Papa,' I said to him, 'are you calling Catherine as you did then?'"

'You are such a tease,' he murmured, as if to say, 'You don't understand.'

Then I understood (or at least I believe I understood) that he was addressing St. Catherine. It was as if he were sending me a message. I'm now rereading his book on St. Catherine, and perhaps there I'll find the key. ●

1) Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) was an American painter, one of the leaders in the renewal movement for painting. He is considered to be the principal representative of the abstract expressionists.

FAMILY LIFE

Weakened family life is one of the greatest social ills of our time.

The "New Family" Movement has as its aim to bring the Focolare spirit of unity into family life, so that each family will be deeply united within itself and with other families.

Mike and Jeanette Zwartjes live in San Antonio, Texas. At a recent gathering of the Focolare Movement they shared some of their experiences in living the Gospel.



One Sunday afternoon our family went for an outing at the lake with my husband's brother's family. On the way there I had suggested going on a scenic route to the lake. No one took me seriously, so I felt ignored and I began to feel separated from the others. When we got to the lake everyone decided to go for a walk along a rocky shore there and I went along. The kids started throwing rocks into the water to make splashes — the bigger the better. I was in no mood to get wet so I started walking on ahead by myself. Then I realized I was not loving the others and I decided to make myself one with them. I walked back to where they were. I saw many flat rocks on the shore and I started trying to skip them across the water. Gradually everyone joined in, the splashing stopped and we all had a great time. I felt part of the family again; unity had been restored.

○

Half the school year had gone by and our eight year old son, Jeff, still wasn't settled into a routine for getting his homework done. Each day it was a struggle with him wanting to watch TV, play, etc. One day I was so tired of this uphill battle that I decided to call my husband to see with Jesus in our midst what I could do about it. The only thing we decided was to really try to handle it with pure love. After talking with him I had an idea to make cards for Jeff that had homework rules and choices he could go by. He liked the idea and it was like a game for him. He sat right down and finished his homework faster than he ever had. And everyday after that to the end of school he would come home and get his homework done without

any more prodding and tears. Deciding to love Jeff instead of nagging him turned the situation around entirely.

Jeannette

I ride the city bus to and from work everyday. Usually the service is good, but during one period of time, the bus on my route kept breaking down. One Friday, I was riding home and there were only four of us on the bus — myself and three ladies. As we arrived in the suburb where I live the bus broke down about three fourths of a mile from my home. As the four of us sat there waiting to see if the driver could get the bus going again, one of the ladies remarked how her young children were at home alone and were expecting her. The driver announced that he'd have to call for another bus, and I knew that it would take at least thirty to forty minutes for it to come. Another of the ladies was a woman about sixty years old, who lived a block from me. She had two grocery bags with her. I decided to walk the rest of the way and as an act of love, I decided to offer to carry her bags for her if she would like to walk instead of waiting for the other bus. Her reaction to my offer was totally unexpected. Instead of thanking me for the offer she almost ridiculed me for suggesting such a silly thing as her walking all the way home. I somewhat sheepishly left and started walking home. My first reaction to this was to feel indignant — I thought to myself, "Well, if you don't want my help, then sit there on the bus!" I knew, of course, that I still had to love that lady even though she had rejected my good intention. By the time I reached home I realized that to really love her, I had to get in my car and go back and offer her and the others a ride. When I got back to the bus I picked up the lady who had refused my offer and then drove a couple of blocks to give a ride to the other lady who was walking in order to get home to her children. Both of them were very grateful for the ride. And yet, for me, the real reward was in knowing that I had loved regardless of how I was treated in return.

Mike



GENFEST '80



It seemed that it only took a few seconds for the Flaminio Stadium to become packed to its capacity. However, the large numbers did not create confusion. The silence and attention during Chiara Lubich's opening talk was impressive. The entire performance was marked by an exuberant joy and a deep awareness that the theme "For a United World," required that each one be ready to commit him or herself totally, not just for an evening, but for life.

Thousands of young people from fifty-eight nations throughout the entire world traveled to Rome in May for the 1980 Genfest. This event marked an historical step for the Gen Movement.

On Saturday evening, May 17th, they crowded the stands and the field of the Flaminio Stadium, the largest outdoor stadium in Rome. The title for this year's Genfest was "For a United World," and the program was opened by Chiara Lubich, whose message is printed on the following pages.

The rest of the program consisted in songs, dances, pantomimes, sketches, musical pieces and a few short talks.

The following morning Pope John Paul II celebrated Mass for all the participants of the Genfest on the square in front of the Vatican Basilica.

The 1980 Genfest was the fifth such festival at an international level. In 1972 the first Genfest was held in Loppiano,¹ and three thousand young people participated. The natural amphitheater there proved very quickly to be inadequate for the eight thousand parti-

cipants at the 1973 Genfest and the ten thousand in 1974.

Therefore, the 1975 Genfest was held in Rome at the Sports Arena. It was organized as one of the events of the Holy Year and twenty thousand young people participated. Also on that occasion the Pope — then Paul VI — celebrated Mass for them.

Between 1975 and 1980, the Genfests continued on a national or local level. Just to give some examples we can mention those held in New York, Brussels, Berlin, London, Amsterdam, Madrid, Zurich, Buenos Aires and Hong Kong.

The following thirteen pages of this magazine are dedicated to a coverage of this event.

1) A small city built by the Focolare Movement near Florence, Italy. It embodies a concrete expression of a society founded on the Gospel. Its inhabitants live according to the spirituality of unity of the Focolare Movement.

Chiara Lubich

“Moment of God”

*Printed here is the message which the foundress of the Focolare Movement gave at the beginning of the 1980 Genfest.
The power of her words created immediately that unity about which she spoke, setting the tone for the entire performance.*

Dearest Gen and all of you young people who are preparing to celebrate the 1980 Genfest.

Welcome to the stadium which will shortly be the setting for a series of songs, musical pieces, mimes, experiences, sketches, which you yourselves have prepared with great care and enthusiasm all over the world.

The time has come! The moment which we like to call “The Moment of God” has arrived.

So let it be in God’s name that we open this youth festival. It is not meant to be just a joyful event, no matter how enthusiastic and dynamic, but rather an event which has been given a very committing motto: “For a United World.”

This is the real reason which has brought such a large number of you to Rome this evening. Is this idea relevant today? Does the world need to be called back to unity? Is there any sense in our trying to contribute towards building harmony on this mixed up planet of ours, which hopes, struggles, suffers, laughs, hates and kills?

I believe no one can deny having seen all over this world which we love, the most painful wounds brought about by endless disunities.

Look at the generations. Can’t you see how they tend to live completely separated from one another? Haven’t you seen an ever increasing lack of understanding between parents and children? Haven’t you noticed the distance between them growing because of a mutual inability to listen

*“Gen, you Gen,
be the first to begin.
Base your lives. . . all
of your activities and efforts
on this love
which comes from heaven.”*

and to understand? Aren’t we witnessing today the destruction of or substitution for, the family, which in the history of man has always been the fundamental cell of society?

And what about disunity between the sexes? Isn’t there sometimes an exasperated search by men and women for their role in society which leads to conflicts and misunderstandings?

Hasn’t industrial society, which is based on having, instead of on being, caused new areas of alienation? Division among people continues to advance. There are the new poor: the aged who are non-productive, young people who are drop-outs, the unemployed. . . This fact — that more value is placed on wealth than on the individual — has provoked both personal and collective tensions, frustrations and despair.

There is more disunity on the international level, for example for world dominance between East and West. There is disunity between North and South — between the rich industrial-

ized countries and the poor developing ones. And there are still racial divisions like those within many nations in Africa.

There are even divisions among those who promote the same ideologies, as in the Asian countries, and even among religions, like those, for example, resulting from the reawakening in the Islamic world.

And can we call something unity which is based on the oppression of human rights and of every freedom? Can we give the name of unity to anything that seems to be achieved in places where religious freedom is curtailed?

At this point, we could ask ourselves, are there only disunities, or unities which are unjust that exist in the world? No. Thanks to God and to people of good will, praiseworthy efforts are being made to recompose unity, to counteract the various divisions and injustices.

Let’s take a look at individuals and at groups. We note that people are more disposed to serve others, to see that the elderly, drop-outs, the handicapped, drug addicts, and refugees feel that they are once more a part of society. We notice a commitment to help hospitals in the treatment of alcoholics, and to sustain the family unit and life.

There is a greater readiness to help in disaster zones, to offer medical and technical aid to depressed areas, and to fight against hunger in the third world.

There is a reawakening of the fundamental sense of unity, especially in those communities which have a spiritual commitment. Despite everything, the true value of the family, open to the society which surrounds it, is being rediscovered in a new way.

Private groups work for the promotion of human rights, and there are others who work in various ways, especially to help peoples in need.

National and international efforts progress.

Every day meetings take place between representatives of different nations to bring about more open relationships of collaboration.

In the field of ecumenism, the promotion of contacts at the highest levels is accompanied by ecumenical action aimed at building personal relationships at the grass roots level.

So now we might ask ourselves: what is the role of the Gen Movement, and what can its contribution be, in the present day historical context?

The Gen Movement knows that it is a child of the Church, the Church of the year 2000, which was born twenty centuries ago from the heart of Christ. Before founding it, he prayed to the Father, "Father, may they all be one" (John 17:21). In other words, he was praying for the unity of the world. That is why the contribution of the Gen Movement cannot but be of immense importance, and of tremendous value. Its task is that of helping a divine, supernatural and very powerful force flow into those human efforts which are already trying to build bridges and to establish relationships.

The Gen know the mystery of the God whom they adore.

He is One as is nothing else in the created universe. And yet he is three. The Holy Trinity is made up of three persons. What makes them one? Love.

The Gen are aware that they can participate in this divine love which makes God one, and that they are capable of injecting it into the structures of society, among individuals, groups, and peoples, bringing about a unity which is unique, strong, unbreakable.

Gen, you Gen, be the first to begin. Base your lives, your units,¹ all of your activities and efforts on this love which comes from heaven.



Chiara Lubich, greeting the 40,000 participants of the Genfest. She ended her message by saying, "With this vision, with this hope, with this immense richness, we declare the Genfest open."

Today too, even at this moment, I'm certain that you are reevaluating your reasons for being here. You are not here mainly to sing, to play, to act, to speak or to dance. You are here to love.

In this way you begin the Genfest by bringing about here, among all of you, that unity which you desire for the whole world.

Reciprocal love among you is already a reality. Therefore, you are ready to die for one another.

What will happen then?

Christ will be in your midst, spectator and actor in the Genfest. His glory will be assured and the witness to the world which surrounds you will be great and effective.

The Genfest will then be a springboard for the bright future which awaits you. Spread throughout more than one hundred nations you will announce your message with an energy that is a hundred times greater. But above all, you will communicate this great reality with a renewed conviction. Look, you will say, look, God has sent his own love upon the earth. Let us make unity shine out therefore in all the world.

With this vision, with this hope, with this immense richness, we declare the Genfest open.

Chiara Lubich

1) The Gen meet regularly forming small groups called units.

THOUSANDS FOR A UNITED WORLD

by ROSANNA CANTELMÌ

"Festival" is a troublesome word, one that has lost its meaning over the years and is often used in connection with events that are seldom really joyful. And yet today, under this drizzly gray sky, we are experiencing a real festival. It's not something that has happened merely by chance, because it is noticeable that many of the thousands of young people crowding this stadium began to work for this event some time ago. It may have been difficult for them to maintain the commitment they had made, but nonetheless they lived it out day by day.

The motto, "For a United World," is written in many different languages on the banners hung all over, and if one but looks out on the overcrowded streets of this large, apathetic city it could seem like madness. But not here, where we can already experience something of a united world, without it being just a dream, an evasion or a feeling.

On the contrary, a realistic examination of "this mixed-up planet of ours which hopes, struggles, suffers, laughs, hates and kills,"¹ was not lacking in the opening remarks at this gathering. It was an examination capable of seeing also the positive: mankind's attempts to work together, to converse and to help one another, an examination which also clarified the meaning and basic objective of our getting together this evening — "to help a divine, supernatural and very powerful force flow into those human efforts which are already trying to build bridges and establish relationships."²

A divine force, an answer, a presence of God, which — consciously or



After Chiara's talk, a cavalcade of folk numbers started. The representatives from the different continents brought the greetings from their countries in this way. Here we see the Gen girls from China performing the "Dance of the Scarves."

unconsciously — we young people of this generation are seeking. I am particularly aware of it tonight since we are here not only in order, "... to sing, to play, to act, to speak or to dance, but above all, to love,"³ so that whether we be spectators or actors, "Christ may be in our midst."

In fact, tonight I feel that I can reach out to this crowd — which is no longer a shapeless mass, but is made of individuals who are like me — and I feel that they reach out to me. Here I can understand who I am and who we are.

A few years ago, when the first confusing questions of youth began to assail me, I felt a consuming desire — which I later buried — that what

is "personal" for each one of us might belong to everyone, and that all people might be as one. Tonight I feel that desire fulfilled. It is the same need we feel today to do away with the isolation, fear and individualism which threaten to immobilize all of us.

And there is more: in this festival which we have called "a moment of God," I can truly live charity with everyone and they with me, by beginning to open up to, and participate in, the divine love which is within ourselves and the others. I can also sense and, together with everyone, pause to meditate on the hidden meaning of suffering, without ever again having to flee from it or suppress it. I feel that I have found an

answer within me to the demands which many of us had a few years back for new kinds of human relations, meaningfulness and real freedom.

And then? My heart begins to beat faster. Not just because there are so many of us here singing tonight, or because it is impressive to watch that beam of light which circles the stadium in the darkness, illuminating a sea of faces and arms and hands which sway harmoniously in time with the music. Not just because of this. But more than anything else, because you can feel that that divine force, that divine presence, is here among us, in us. It goes hand in hand with what you feel within, with what you are and what you really want. And it binds you to the others, to the one sitting next to you, to the extent that you too know that a united world is not impossible.

There is no outward evidence of this discovery. Rather, it has an interior quality; a veil of dignity covers the joy, as if each one of us were empty of him or herself, and fully aware that it won't be easy, but we



The young people from Ireland greeted the entire stadium from the stands by forming an enormous three-leafed clover which is their national symbol. Later, on the stage, some of them sang together a song that Marian had written. It told of her experience of how she is continually able to see the deep meaning of suffering is her life since she has a handicapping disease.

The Gen from Switzerland offered the Genfest a very original pantomime. It presented humanity divided into different social categories represented by gigantic symbolic objects. At a certain point, they discover that they can come together and create new kinds of relationships which are symbolized by golden tubes in which white balls rolled. The musical accompaniment was of a very high quality and added to the overall effect of the pantomime.



are here; it has already begun; there is a seed. . . . We represent many others who want to continue to live, suffer, and commit themselves to keep on struggling for unity all the way to the end. It becomes the festival of those who discover all at once — even while aware of all the difficulties — that it is still extra-

ordinarily beautiful to be young, provided that there is a true ideal for which you can give your life.

Unity — all of us know this and we like it — is a goal which will always ask us to part, to reach out to the others, to mix with many people, without withdrawing into the sidelines.

There will certainly be other moments of respite like this one. And each time the celebration will be even greater. ●

- 1) Chiara Lubich, *Message to the 1980 Genfest.*
- 2) *Ibid.*
- 3) *Ibid.*

OUR COMMITMENT: GIVE GENFEST TO THE WORLD

About thirty Gen from different cities of the United States and Canada participated in the 1980 Genfest. They were fully aware that they represented the many young people who strive to live the ideal of unity in North America, and their desire was most of all to give their contribution so that the Genfest would really be a "moment of God."



The Australian Gen sang a song using the traditional instruments of their country. In the background we see the North American Gen who were next on the program. Their song, written in Western style, expressed the joy of having discovered God who is love: "So come on now, all you people, let's sing a song that will not die, about a God who loves his children. . . ."

Paul and Mike are brothers and live in Chicago. "What did you think of the Genfest?" we asked Paul. "I think that there was a presence of God there and everyone was really happy. The thing that impressed me most was the unity among all of us."

Mike added, "I've always found it hard to talk about God. Perhaps it's the environment where I live. There I saw thousands of young people who are ready to give their lives for this ideal and are not afraid to say so."

Paul, from Indiana, explained: "I haven't known the Gen very long. I came on this trip more on an impulse, out of curiosity. But the difficulties were not lacking. I tried to keep an open mind and not have a lot of expectations. Once there, as I tried to live and love one moment after the other, I realized that God

was asking a little bit more of me all the time — more than I actually wanted to give. It was hard, but because I was surrounded by people who were trying to live mutual love, I couldn't remain selfish. As a result, I have found that I can live charity more than ever before, and I have understood that there is no limit to what God can do through a person who gives himself completely to God and lets God use him in his own way."

At this point, Mike, a social worker from New York, came up. "There were many different experiences, for example, being able to be right up in front with the rest of the Gen and receiving Communion from the Pope was a grace for me. After the Genfest, in these past few days, being with the Gen from the different continents, from Chile, Argentina, and Hong Kong, toge-

ther with those of us from U.S.A., Canada and Puerto Rico, I had the impression that the Genfest was continuing because we tried to constantly build unity among ourselves."

While waiting for the train to take them to Florence, some of the other Gen shared their impressions. Ken, from Edmonton in Western Canada, had written the song which the Gen had sung for everyone at the Genfest. "My major experience was to see God's love for me and to realize my responsibility to share that love with others, as Chiara told us in her talk. I remember one moment, when it had started raining. I was sitting way up front and could not see too well. The thought occurred to me that even the Genfest passes and I realized that the only thing that mattered was to love, to be love. Even though I was in the midst of thousands of people, I felt alone before God, responsible only to him. So when we went up to sing, I tried to be an expression of love for the others."

The train was delayed giving time also for John, from New Jersey, to add: "I tried to go to the Genfest with the desire not so much to receive something, but to give. When it was our turn to go on stage, I was very nervous and scared inside. But just as we were announced, I took that last step to say, 'For you, Jesus, as a gift.' Once on stage, I felt very calm and very much one with everyone in the stadium. Afterwards, I felt that more than having performed for a crowd of thousands, I had simply offered my part for building unity. Then the Mass with the Pope the next day for me was the climax of the whole trip!"

Jim, also from New Jersey, added: "I discovered at the Genfest that it is possible to keep Jesus in the midst also in a large crowd. Towards the end what struck me most was to see the whole stadium, everyone, holding hands and moving as one. But most of all, it was the unity achieved with over forty



The finale of the Genfest was a thirty-minute-long pantomime divided in three parts: the discovery of the love of God seen in the creation of man; then trials and sufferings; but if suffering is embraced, it leads us to a joy which is more authentic in order to reach in the end, the explosion of unity. Sixty Gen boys from different countries had prepared this "rock symphony" and dance.

thousand young people. It was a grace to go to this Genfest. I feel that the world can be one and I hope that I will be able to go back now and have the courage to live the will of God."

Just as they were loading the suitcases on to the train, Roy, from San Antonio, Texas, had time to say: "The continuation of the Genfest Sunday morning at the Vatican with the Pope was also a beautiful experience for me since I never thought I'd have a chance to be up at the altar by the Pope, and also to see Chiara go up to the Pope and receive his blessing at the offertory. It was something I will treasure for the rest of my life — this whole Genfest. I go home with a peace, a feeling of happiness inside my heart knowing that God shows his immense love for us in many ways."

The subtle roar of the jets of the 747 carrying some of the Gen girls back to the States formed the background for the tape they made of their impressions.

The trip going to the Genfest had been quite an adventure for Carol from San Jose, California. Her connection at New York was so

close that she arrived just a few minutes before they closed the gate. "For me this experience has really encouraged me to keep living the Gospel in every moment; to keep starting over again if I fail and not just give up. I really want to go ahead to do my part so that a united world will come sooner."

Renee was among the youngest in the group. She lives and goes to high school in Chicago. "During the Genfest, when I saw all the unity and felt all the fire, I realized that I couldn't keep this fire for myself, but that it is for all; everyone really needs it. These days have given me a push to go ahead."

Debbie, from Texas, who usually was able to keep everyone laughing, got serious for a moment. "The Genfest for me was an extraordinary experience. I really took Chiara's message to heart and I'm ready to go back and work hard at reaching our goal — a united world."

Annie, a legal secretary from New Jersey, took the tape recorder from Debbie. "This week has been a continuous experience of the love of God. I understood in a deeper way that all the divisions which we see around us are not meant to be.

I can't just resign myself. God wants us all to be one and I'm ready to do my part."

Leona is a student counselor from North Bay, Canada. She said everything in just a few words: "I really can't express the joy and peace I feel at this moment. I am ready to leave everything to follow this ideal, God, who is everything for me."

Although Liz, who lives and works in New York, has known the Gen for a few years, this was her first experience of an event of this kind. "It was so beautiful to see all those young people, the Gen from all over the world. I saw something in their eyes, like a light. I saw what it meant that they had chosen God, that they want to live for him."

Diana, a medical student from New York, summarized everything in this way: "It was a strong experience for all of us, an experience we will never forget. We are returning home like new people, with a deeper commitment to live the Gospel to the fullest, whatever it may cost."

The choice they have made

by MICHELE ZANZUCCHI

Near the end of 1966, a pressing need was felt within the Focolare Movement; it was that of gathering together all the young people and children who had become associated with the Movement over the years. The need was answered with the birth of the Movement's second generation — The Gen Movement.

The word "Gen" stands for "New Generation." This expression does not refer so much to the sequence of generations within the Focolare Movement (more specifically, young people from 15 to 30 years of age, called Gen 2; children 8 to 15 years of age, called Gen 3; and children under 8, called Gen 4) as to the fact that it is a generation born with the intention of contributing to a change in human relationships and in society. By seeking to promote the law of love, the Gen Movement hopes to make society "new."

The Gen Movement owes its own unity to the spirituality which inspires it, that of the Focolare Movement, which is transmitted to it bit by bit in its entirety. Like all the members of the Movement, the Gen, having come in contact with the experience of the Gospel put into practice, commit themselves to revolutionizing their own lives and their personal relationships in all their various aspects. Thus God-Love becomes the ideal of their life and the Gospel, the book which inspires it. The presence of God in every person — often first discovered in the poor, in outcasts, and in the "least"¹ — reveals to the Gen a vision of Christianity with a universal social dimension. Mutual love — the kind of love taught by Jesus, which is ready to give totally of itself — becomes the key to a path towards sanctification which is not only personal, but collective.

This is why the Gen consider their spiritual and material possessions a "patrimony from God" which must

During the intermission it stopped raining and everyone started to move around. Some took out sandwiches and there was an exchange of ideas among all. But next to the stage something strange took place. The Gen from Belgium assembled piece by piece an enormous giant, which was used in the first number of the second part of the performance: the difficult battle between David and Goliath. At the end, the giant was be-headed.



be administered for the good of all. For this reason, they share everything they own, following the example of the early Christians. In so doing, they know that they are contributing to a much vaster undertaking on a worldwide level, one which will overcome all cultural, racial, economic and religious divisions in order to achieve — sooner or later — a "global culture" and individuals with a world dimension, the necessary premise for the fulfillment of Jesus' testament: "May they all be one" (Jn.17:21). The title of this latest Genfest, "For a United World," attests to this.

The first concrete expression of this commitment was "Operation Africa," a project carried out in various ways (through jobs, performances, handicrafts, sales, etc.) for the benefit of a Cameroon tribe, the Bangwa of Fontem, and later extended to others as well. They regarded this as, "Not pious charity or fawning colonialism but rather a just act towards the continent which has been most ill-treated by the Western world," so that these peoples can express themselves as they are, with all their potential.

This project was followed by others such as "Operation Feliciano" in

Argentina, "Operation Tondo" in the Philippines, and "Operation Mocambos" in Brazil. All of these and others as well, were aimed at improving the quality of human life among the urban poor.

There is a firm conviction underlying all of these projects: "We must love to the point of being ready to die for our own people, going out to those around us and making their pain our own, as Jesus did. He put himself at the complete disposal of others in the most concrete ways, both spiritual and material. Today the poor, the blind, the dead, the sinners of Jesus' times . . . are others. Perhaps they have different names: drug addicts, outcasts, people with a one-sided outlook on life, those who hate, those who support the most unreasonable immorality; there are the lonely children of divorced parents, those who have no family and are alienated, the sick, the dying, young people on drugs, prisoners. . . Today Jesus would come to give his life for these people, to save them from all their afflictions. Jesus came twenty centuries ago. Jesus was young. He would like to return, above all, through us young people."²

This is the life of the Gen Movement. It is a demanding life, because it is an attempt to live in conformity with the Gospel. "But a proposal, no matter how difficult or heroic it may be, (and the Gen affirm this, looking back on their own experience) will be accepted by many, very many, young people if it is a life; if it is concrete and not just words. It is a matter of living in order to follow a Man, Jesus, not an idea or an ideology. And this, therefore, is their proposal."

Precisely because of this, the Gen do not lose sight of the fact that they are children of the Church. They love the Church, and feel that they are an active part of her. But not all the Gen are Catholics. Some are Anglicans, members of the Reformed Church, Baptists, Orthodox, Evangelical. . . . And from other religions as well: Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus. . . . The spirit of the Gen Movement spreads, in fact, as an ecumenical experience — one of approaching and meeting with these other religions.

In this context, the Gen resolve to announce their spirituality to ev-



The moment came for the presentation of the only key which, if understood, can bring the world to unity: embracing suffering. "A God who dies on the cross seems like an absurdity," Rossana told the crowds, "and yet, only in this way was hope given back to every person. In fact, he made himself darkness so that we could have the light; he felt himself separated from the Father, so that we would no longer be alone; he took our sins upon himself, in order to give us forgiveness." Immediately after this talk, the Gen from the region of Trent performed a pantomime entitled, "Why. . ." which symbolized the possibility we have of transforming suffering into love.

everyone, in all its purity and with all its power, without ever separating their words from their life.

Each year they organize several Youth days which were attended in 1979 by a total of 120,000 young people in cities all over the world. And aside from the international Genfests, national and regional Genfests also take place each year. In addition, in order to increase the unity among them, the Gen publish a magazine which comes out in various languages.

At the core of the Gen Movement there exists a small nucleus of young people — about 15,000 in all — who, meeting in small, local units, form the backbone and the soul of the vaster movement which exists around them and which now includes hundred of thousands of young people in more than 100 nations.

The Gen do not want to be a faction but, rather, a bond of unity which helps both groups and individuals to express the common and just truths which each of them contains.

In order to carry out this role, they know that they cannot begin by debating, but by presenting the Gospel with all its human and divine content. This does not mean that the Gen claim to have ready solutions

for every problem. Rather, they have a method (that of evangelical love) for confronting the various questions which arise from time to time.

The Gen, particularly in the last few years, have begun providing the young people with whom they are in contact with various proposals for concrete work. They are following a plan which foresees different types of work according to the differing needs of each locality. (Often this work is done anonymously or in conjunction with a project already sponsored by the Church or by others.) Therefore, these projects take place in the most varied environments: tenements, parishes, schools, hospitals, prisons, nursing homes, public institutions, or neighborhood organizations.

The Gen are working to concretely apply the social aspects of the Gospel; not just in order to provide temporary solutions or make-shift remedies, but rather to deal with these problems — insofar as possible — at their roots.

1) Refers to the sentence in the Gospel, "... as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." (Mt. 25:40)

2) Chiara Lubich, "A Christmas of Fire," to the Gen 2, 1977.

A

ROVING

REPORTER

by DOMENICO FLORIDIA



Some of the Gen told their experiences during the Genfest. Thomas from Berlin belongs to the Lutheran Church. He told of the change which took place in his life after having met the Gen. There were many young people from different Christian denominations at the Genfest.

Along the bridge which leads to Flaminio Stadium, an uninterrupted column of buses was being diverted to the parking lots by a few young people carrying directional signs and wearing blue armbands. They were part of the group responsible for maintaining order at the Genfest. This was my first contact with these 40,000 young people, who had come together "For a United World," in my own city,

which, like all large cities, is filled with clashes and contrasts, with people searching for unity and never reaching it.

I saw some young people getting off a bus from Padua. "Why have you come?" I asked one of them as I helped him gather together his knapsack, sleeping bag, and camera equipment. He lit up a cigarette unhurriedly; he was in the mood to talk.

"The fact is," he said, "that I have to find out whether it is really Jesus of Nazareth who is attracting these people to come here, or if it is something else — perhaps only the desire of not feeling lonely. However, maybe even that is reason enough for 40,000 people to get together."

"Excuse me," a young girl interrupted us, "have you seen the group from Florence?" "Try looking down there, around the bend. I think that's where they are. But wait a minute, do you believe in a united world?"

She might have been in a hurry, but she became serious, forgetting about Florence for the moment.

"I think so, in fact, in our day it's an absolute necessity. I'm not just saying this off the top of my head. Try to understand me. It takes will power to abandon our own egoism and not let ourselves get tied up in our own problems. It won't be easy, and it's a long way off, but it could also be very close if we want it."

"And all these people, why do you think they've come?"

"It's a sign of life; and of a desire to prove that every person — not only the powerful — can make history."

"But do you think it's possible to live the Gospel in this society?"

"It's our only chance if we don't want to lead inconsistent and ineffective lives."

The Genfest had begun. I arrived on the field just at the moment it was starting to rain. I walked over to a boy who did not seem to mind the rain at all. He had simply covered his head with a plastic bag, and was listening attentively to Maristella's song. He came from Lucca and was about 18 years old.

"Why did I come? Deep down, I guess it's because I like to be with other young people. Look, notwithstanding the rain, no one is getting up to leave. That's because we're enjoying ourselves."

His friend standing beside him joined in, "Our bus trip was important too, because it gave us a chance to get to know one another. We exchanged experiences . . . I feel sure that even these little things have a purpose in spite of the fact that the present international situation — in which power and military strength have the upper hand — is not encouraging."

Dean, a 20-year-old boy from Naples, attempted to explain it further: "What political movements cannot accomplish can be accomplished by Christianity. I believe this, even though I'm not a Catholic myself."

Anthony, 22 years old and the perfect likeness of Solzhenitsyn, added, "I'm among people I've never seen before but I feel as though we've always been together. It's like a family."

"Yes, that's true," added Andrea from Gaeta. "What impresses me the most is that all of us are involved in the performance. There's no separation between 'actors' and 'audience.'"

With great effort, I moved nearer to the stage, crossing the field which was so crowded that it made it seem improbable that I would reach my goal.

"Is it unrealistic to speak of a united world?" I asked a young woman.

"If we are capable of bringing this experience of unity out into the world where we live, then it will remain a reality — still small, but strong. At the 1975 Genfest in the Sports Arena there were 20,000 of us. Now we're 40,000. Tomorrow we will be even more."

During the intermission I ate a sandwich. A girl was seated next to me wearing jeans and a long, loose pullover sweater. I could see from her smile that it would be useless to ask her if she believed in this. I decided to change my approach and to play the devil's advocate.

"What in the world do they think they're doing? Don't you think it's childish to go on with that slogan, 'For a United World?'"

Not at all troubled by my provocation, she told me, "This is the only thing I believe in and live for."

"But do you believe that God can really change the world?"

"Having seen that he could change my own life, I believe just that."

A man dressed all in blue, a custodian perhaps, said to me, "I've worked here in this stadium for a good many years but I've never seen it so packed. I've never seen young people like these. With such a crowd there's always the danger of violence breaking out, but here, instead, there's harmony. Just look at the windows and porches of the houses which face the stadium — even they're filled with people watching what's going on here. That never happens. . . ."

Somewhat intimidated by my poor command of foreign languages, I approached the platform in front of the stage and tried out my French: "Where are you from?"

"From Angers."



The Gen from Korea perform the "dance of the fans."

"Why are you here?" I asked one girl.

"I've been a Gen for a year now," she responded.

"And what have you gotten out of this evening?"

"Listen, I feel that I have to bring the meaning of all this to others. I have to tell them that I've seen people who came here from countries all over the world. And above all, I feel that I want to live like this more all the time."

"I'm an American from Los Angeles, but I'm studying in Austria now. That's where I met the Gen," said another boy in English. "I think it's very important to build relationships based on mutual love. Not just here, but always."

"And do you think a united world is possible?" I asked another youth in English.

"Just speak Italian," he told me, "I'm from Sicily."

While others laughed at the funny situation he answered me. "Perhaps we ourselves may never see it, but we can begin to lay its foundation. If the basis is sound, then others will know how to continue to build on it."

The Genfest at Flaminus Stadium was over. Walking down the steps of the exit I met Mike who had known the Gen for several years. "Lately, I've been having some doubts about whether or not to go ahead with this way of life," he told me. "But after tonight, I feel like a battery that's been recharged, but it's not that euphoria which has fooled me so many times in the past. I feel that this is an inner change, something true. I feel that I have to start again!"

After a very short night we got together once more at St. Peter's Square. Many people were tired, but they didn't want anyone to notice. Frances, from Turin, applauded the Pope, who had just exhorted

the Gen to go ahead "... at any cost." She was very happy. "For many years I hated the Church," she told me. "And now I find myself a part of it. I would never have imagined this. And it's all because someone showed real love for me."

I jumped over several barriers and landed on the square in front of the Basilica. Mass was over. The choir was singing "Resurrection," a song which had been repeated twice the night before, as the young people swayed in time with the music. Today, instead, we saw 40,000 white scarves being waved while it was sung. Paul was looking down at the crowd which made quite an impression from up on the square.

"Here in this sacred place I am experiencing the same thing I felt last night at the end of the performance. Yet yesterday, too, the scene was 'sacred' even if it was also very alive and modern. It seems to me that we have bridged a gap."

The Angelus was over. The buses began to depart. A German bus driver, incredible but true, complimented on the orderliness of the parking system. Patricia, one of those responsible for maintaining order, offered him an explanation, "If everyone does his or her own part well, without trying to be first all the time, everything goes smoothly. . . ."

I headed quickly for my car. I was thirsty so I stepped into a restaurant to get something to drink. Unexpectedly, I met Mario and Frank, two friends of mine from Milan. They were tired because they had worked day and night to help make the travel arrangements for the Genfest. The night before, for example, they had hardly slept at all. But their eyes were shining. They were eyes which had seen "a moment of God," and they asked for nothing more. ●

John Paul II: history is made by those who look toward the future

May 18, 1980, St. Peter's Square:

Pope John Paul II spoke to the participants of the Genfest: "You have decided to make love the rule of your life. For this reason, the commitment toward unity has become your program. It is a program which is highly Christian. The Pope is very happy to encourage you to go ahead along this way, no matter what it is going to cost you." When the Holy Father pronounced these words, the entire square burst into a prolonged and enthusiastic applause. It was the climax; everyone was in agreement, aware that a united world can be built only by those who are ready to give their lives for it, while being engrafted profoundly in the Church.

Dearest youth of the Gen Movement,

I give my cordial welcome to all of you. The joy which is seen on your faces and which is expressed through your singing has created around this Eucharistic celebration a climate of intimate and profound communion, the characteristic atmosphere of a family, gathered around the fireplace — "focolare." Yes, the focolare — this expression has great meaning for you. We immediately, spontaneously, think of the first focolare formed by the disciples gathered in the Cenacle in "the upper room" (Acts 1:13) after the Ascension of the Lord. The Acts of the Apostles describes them, "All . . . with one accord devoted . . . to prayer, together with . . . Mary" (Acts 1:14), awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit that had been promised to them by their Lord. As they waited in prayer, in the brotherly union that they formed preparing



for the first coming — and then through that same coming, by living in charity — we see the real beginning, in the deepest sense, of that "For a United World," which is the committing motto of your gathering. In that union which took place in the Cenacle, we could say that we find the beginning and the source of the entire spirituality of the focolarini.

The Movement of which you are an expression has its central, focal point in that love which the spirit of Christ spreads in the hearts of the believers. The world of today has a tremendous need of that love. You are fully aware of this — you have reflected at length on the different tensions that put individuals one against the other; the same can be said of social classes, economic and



That Sunday was also the Holy Father's sixtieth birthday. Through a song written especially for the occasion, and with banners like those pictured here, the members of the Focolare Movement wanted to express their deep affection for the Pope and assure him of their unity.

political areas, groups which are inspired by different ideologies and faiths. In particular, you have become fully aware of the divisions and contradictions introduced into humanity by those ideologies which have a common materialistic basis. If we examine them well, we see that they cannot have any other perspective, any other end result if not that of a reciprocal, frightening destruction.

But you, my dearest young people, you do not give up in front of this reality. With an enthusiasm which is characteristic of your age, you do not give up when you see the present situation. You have turned your glance toward the future, hoping with trust that you will be able to give those who come after you a better world than the one you found.

What gives you such a trust? Where do you get the courage to try to start a gigantic job such as that of building a world which is united? It seems to me that I can almost hear the answer coming from your hearts: "In the words of Jesus. It is he who has asked us to love one another up to the point of becoming one thing. He has prayed for this."

In fact it is so. We have again listened to his voice in the Gospel that has been proclaimed just now. Jesus pronounced those words at the Last Supper, a few hours before his own passion started. They are words which contain the supreme desire of the heart of the Word Incarnate. Jesus gave that desire to the Father, who was the only one who could understand all the intensity and the need, the only one who was able to

respond efficaciously. Jesus asked the Father the gift of unity, unity among all those who would believe in him: "May they all be one" (Jn. 17:21).

Therefore this is not a recommendation addressed directly to us. We must underline this. Jesus, who knows us deeply,¹ knows that he cannot count only on us for the fulfillment of a project which is so radical, so vast. An intervention from above is necessary to help our poor hearts to be plunged into the current of love, flowing among the divine persons. This love makes our hearts capable of overcoming the barriers of selfishness, and of opening up to the "you" that lives in our brothers and sisters in a vital communion. Then each one is able to give up his individuality and to find it again in what we could call our "we" who speaks with the same voice of Christ, the first born of the new humanity.

Vatican II stressed this when, going back to the same passage in Scripture, spoke of "... vistas closed to human reason."² However, from these vistas it appears clear that man, the only being on earth who God wanted for himself, "cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself."³

We can see these "closed vistas" and venture toward them, if we open our hearts to the grace of Christ. This elevates us and enables us to participate in the very life of the Trinity: the very high mystery of the eternal communion among the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This life becomes then the exemplary model, and the source of nourishment for this communion

that must be established among men, "... that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us. . ." (Jn. 17:21).

"In us:" full unity cannot be built on any other foundation. It is necessary therefore that each one be committed first of all to seeking an always deeper union with God through faith, through dialogue in prayer, and the purification of our hearts, if we want to contribute in a fruitful way to the building of unity. For the believer, the vertical dimension — our openness toward God and our relationship with him — is the foundation, the condition for every other commitment in the horizontal dimension, that is, in the relationships with our brothers and sisters.

However, this does not mean, obviously, that our commitment to establish new, sincere, cordial relationships with others has little importance. On the contrary, the quality of these relationships is, according to Scripture, the criterion which verifies the authenticity of the relationship that one claims to have with God.⁴ The effort to build unity, therefore, becomes the testing ground upon which each Christian must verify the seriousness of his adhesion to the Gospel.

Concretely then, what attitude should every Christian have when meeting other human beings? It will be fundamentally an attitude of trust and of esteem. A Christian must believe in "... man with all his capacity for greatness, but at the same time, with his need to be redeemed from the evil and sin within him."⁵ This is what I said in the message at the beginning of this year



The evening before, at the Flaminio Stadium, Chiara Lubich had said: "The Gen Movement knows that it is a child of the Church, the Church of the year 2000, which was born twenty centuries ago from the heart of Christ. Before founding it, he prayed to the Father, 'Father, may they all be one' (John 17:21). In the sequence of pictures here to the left, we see Chiara Lubich offering the Holy Father a silver chalice, almost as if she were giving him symbolically, the "yes" which all the Gen all over the world have said to Jesus.

for the World Day of Peace, and I am glad to stress it again on this particularly meaningful occasion. I mean, the need to go deeply down into ourselves to reach those areas in which — overcoming the divisions which exist within us and among us — we can discover that the dynamic forces of each human being lead him to meet others, to mutual respect, to brotherhood and to peace.

Once we have adopted this way of looking at things, we are spontaneously led to understand the opinions of the others, and to reduce their eventual errors to their real proportions; to correct, to modify ones viewpoints on the basis of the new aspects of truth which may emerge from the dialogue. In particular, we become capable of avoiding the attitude of those who, in the ardor of polemic, end up by taking away the credit from those who think differently, attributing to them intentions which are dishonest and incorrect methods.

Only those who cultivate a sincere respect for other human beings can open with them a fruitful and constructive dialogue. In that message I defined dialogue as an "... indispensable means for attaining peace."⁶ And it is so, at least when those who practice dialogue make an effort to keep the rules which are proper to it. My predecessor Pope Paul VI, has described them in a wonderful way, in his Encyclical "Ecclesiam Suam." He said: "... dialogues ... must not be marked by arrogance ... or offensive bitterness ... What gives it its authority is the fact that it affirms the truth, shares with others the gifts of charity, is itself an example of virtue, avoids preemptive language, makes no demands. It is peaceful, has no use for extreme methods, is patient under contradiction and inclines toward generosity."⁷

Dialogue: this is the way in which it is possible to take great steps towards an always deeper understanding, towards unity — a goal which must always be perfected on earth, even though it is never entirely reached here.

However, there is a prejudicial need which is a condition for any serious commitment in this sense: that is, the ability to forgive.

Sin is part of the heritage that historical man carries with him. It is impossible therefore to think of being able to meet man without meeting sin. A realistic foundation for a dialogue must also take into account the necessity for "reconciliation" among people who have been divided by sin. For this reason Jesus insisted with great strength on our duty to forgive. He even made this the condition upon which our hope for forgiveness from God is based.

He in person has given us the example, because on the Cross absolute innocence and the worst malice met. He prayed: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). This prayer removes every possible excuse we could have for refusing to forgive and for closing ourselves within ourselves.

Saint Stephen had understood this perfectly. In the first reading of today's liturgy, we saw how, while he was being stoned to death, he pronounced the words which give us forever the measure of his moral greatness: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:60).

Dearest young people, new generation, you hold the world of the future in your hands! You have decided to make love the rule of your life. For this reason, the commitment toward unity has become your program. It is a program which is highly Christian. The Pope is very happy to encourage you to go ahead along this way, no matter what it is going to cost you. You must show your peers a generous enthusiasm, and also an inflexible perseverance in your commitment to build a united world.

You know where to find the source from which to take the necessary energy for this difficult program. It is in the heart of the One who is, "... the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the



beginning and the end" (Rv. 22:13). It is said of him that he gives to each one to "... take the water of life without price" (Rv. 22:17).

May Christ therefore be the meeting point, the certain one, the foun-

hesitation. May the passionate invocation of the Church, "Come, Lord Jesus," become the spontaneous desire of your hearts, which are never satisfied in the present, because they are always tending towards the "not-yet" fulfilled promise.

dation of every trust that knows no

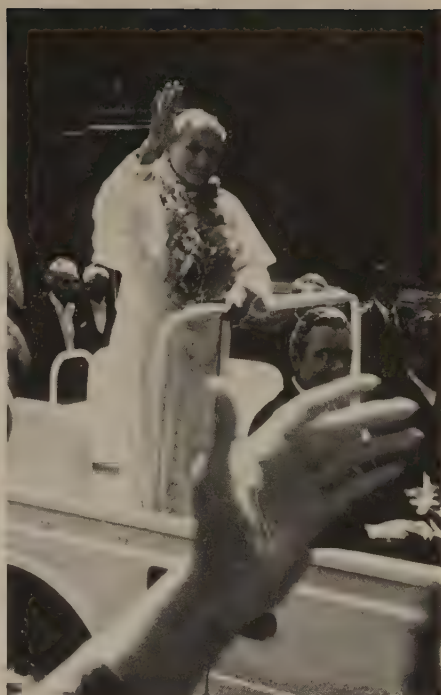
Dearest young people, your lives must shout out to the world your faith in the One who said, "Behold I am coming soon, bringing my recompense . . ." (Rv. 22:12). You must be the avantguard of people on their way towards the "new heaven" and that "... new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pt. 3:13). Those who know how to look at the future are those who make history. The others are dragged along and end up finding themselves at the margin of their existence, always bundled up in the network of their worries, projects, and hopes which

in the end reveal themselves to be deceiving and alienating. Only those who commit themselves in the present without letting it capture them, but remaining with eyes of their hearts always aiming at seeking "... the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1), can orient history towards its fulfillment.

This Eucharistic celebration of ours is an anticipation of that fulfillment "in the mystery." Now, as in every Mass, we unite the invocation of the Holy Spirit to that of the Church, the spouse of Christ still in tribulation in the present-day world, "The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'" (Rv. 22:17). That is, the liturgy of the earth harmonizes with that of heaven. Now, as in every Mass, may our hearts which are in need of comfort, receive the reassuring answer. He who confirms these things tells you, "Surely I am coming soon" (Rv. 22:20).

Supported by this certainty, we continue on our way along the road of the world, feeling more united with one another. At the same time, we take in our hearts the desire, which has become more ardent now,

After Mass, the Holy Father went down to greet the Gen who are sick or handicapped and who were seated in the first row. The Pope then continued for over a half-hour to greet personally as many of the Gen as possible. Each one wanted to wish him all the best for his birthday in the warmest way possible.



Above we see the Pope with a wreath of flowers around his neck which an Asian Gen had given him. "The joy which is seen on your faces and which is expressed through your singing has created. . . the characteristic atmosphere of a family gathered around the fireplace — 'focolare'." The Pope later continued: "Dearest young people, new generation, you hold the world of the future in your hands! You have decided to make love the rule of your life. For this reason, the commitment toward unity has become your program."

to give to our brothers and sisters who are still enveloped in the shadow of doubt and discomfort the good news: that also on the horizon of their existence the "... bright morning star" (Rv. 22:16), has come, the Redeemer of man, Christ Jesus. ●

1) "... but Jesus did not trust himself to them, because he knew all men and needed no one to bear witness of man; for he himself knew what was in man" (Jn. 2:24-25).

2) "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," n. 24. The Documents of Vatican II, Walter M. Abbott, ed. (New York: Guild Press, 1966), p. 223.

3) Ibid., p. 223.

4) "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" (1 Jn. 4:20). "But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" (1 Jn. 3:17).

5) Pope John Paul II, Message for World Day of Peace, n. 2, as published in "L'Osservatore Romano," English Edition, December 24, 1979, p. 1.

6) Ibid.

7) Pope Paul VI, "Ecclesiam Suam," no. 81, as published in The Pope Speaks, Vol. 10, 1964-65, p. 281.

WORD OF LIFE

AUGUST

**"Try your best
to enter by the narrow door,
because, I tell you,
many will try to enter
and will not succeed."**

(Luke 13:24)

*Due to the fact that this is the combined August-September issue
we are publishing the words of life for both months.*

"Try your best to enter by the narrow door, because, I tell you, many will try to enter and will not succeed" (Luke 13:24).

According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus gave this reply to a Jew who had asked him, "Lord, is it true that only a few will be saved?"

Among the Jews of those times there was a certain pessimism concerning eternal salvation. In the first century after Christ one of them wrote, "The Heavenly Father has created this world for the love of many, but the future world for few." Another wrote, "Those who are lost are more than those who are saved, as the wave is more than one drop."

Probably the Jew who had asked Jesus this question was influenced by his environment.

As on other occasions, Jesus did not want to enter a discussion and say exactly whether few or many would be saved. Instead he invited his questioner to make a decision.

And this is what he is doing with you today. He does not want you to stop and speculate, but to make the decision to "do it," to enter by the narrow door.

"Try your best to enter by the narrow door, because, I tell you, many will try to enter and will not succeed."

The door. Here Jesus uses the image of a door leading into a room. It is the banquet hall, the Messianic banquet, which means heaven. In order to enter there, it is necessary for you to pass through the narrow door that "the Master will close" unexpectedly. In fact, the time that you have is brief and it passes relentlessly. You must, therefore, try your best to enter; you must hurry to work out your conversion to God before it is too late.

But in order to convert to God, you must know how to face suffering, to accept it and to embrace it. The same is true for maintaining your conversion to God. You must pass through many trials, as the Gospel insists. This is the narrow door.

"Try your best to enter by the narrow door, because, I tell you, many will try to enter and will not succeed."

Some have thought that Jesus used the "narrow door," to ask believers to be severe and ascetic with acts of penitence, scourgings, prolonged fasting and other things of which only few are capable. But that is not it. One enters the narrow way by following Jesus and what he said — that whoever wants to follow him must deny himself and take up his cross, because this is the will of God. This way is not an easy one but it is one that every person can pursue.

"Try your best to enter by the narrow door, because, I tell you, many will try to enter and will not succeed."

Jesus speaks very clearly: "many . . . will not succeed."

The Gospel of Matthew also refers to Jesus using the example of the door. You remember when he said: "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. But the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Mt. 7:13-14).

Also here Jesus invites you to behave in a Christian manner, one which conforms to the demands of the Gospel, to be pure, merciful, bearers of peace, meek, poor, to hunger for justice, to be ready to accept persecution . . . as he requested in his Sermon on the Mount. It is at the conclusion of this talk that we find this sentence.

He wants you to overcome the temptation to an easy existence; he does not want you to exclude the cross from your life. If you are in danger of falling into mediocrity, he encourages you to take the narrow way. In a word, what Jesus wants is that you put the Gospel into practice. It is certainly a difficult task, but it is necessary to begin, because the Gospel is the way, the road that brings you to life.

Chiara Lubich

WORD OF LIFE

SEPTEMBER

"And indeed, which of you here, intending to build a tower, would not first sit down and work out the cost to see if you had enough to complete it?"

(Luke 14:28)

"And indeed, which of you here, intending to build a tower, would not first sit down and work out the cost to see if you had enough to complete it?" (Luke 14:28).

With these words Jesus asks you to first reflect before beginning a difficult task. Practically speaking, this means that to be a Christian is not something to be taken lightly, it is a very serious undertaking.

This warning is at the beginning of two parables that you certainly know: the one of the tower to be constructed and the one of the king who is about to go to war.

A short time before, Jesus, speaking to the crowd, had asked everyone to be detached from everything, even from their families and from their very own lives in order to be his disciples. He added that it is essential in being a Christian to know how to carry one's own cross.

In the parable of the tower he affirmed the importance of calculating the cost in order to avoid ridicule in case of failure. In the parable of the king on his way to war, Jesus spoke of the necessity of estimating the number of soldiers first. If their number were insufficient, the king would have to determine if he should send an ambassador of peace instead.

"And indeed, which of you here, intending to build a tower, would not first sit down and work out the cost to see if you had enough to complete it?"

"So therefore," says Jesus, concluding his discourse on the condi-

tions required to follow him, "whoever of you does not renounce all that you have, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).

Some are called to an effective, real, material renunciation, but a spiritual renunciation is required of us all.

Everything, everything, everything that your heart possesses must be put aside. The first place in your heart must be given to God and to his law. Everything else must be loved for him: your relatives, your worldly goods, work, studies, art, career, home, health. . . .

To enable you to construct the tower of your Christian life, you must determine if your heart has this sense of availability, this total detachment. If this is not so, you will fail in your vocation, exposing yourself to ridicule. It is like combatting an enemy with twenty thousand soldiers with a handful of men. Your defeat is certain.

Therefore, to be a Christian is a very demanding enterprise.

It is not something to be taken lightly.

"And indeed, which of you here, intending to build a tower, would not first sit down and work out the cost to see if you had enough to complete it?"

Perhaps after reading something about religion that captivated you, or after having heard a lecture by a famous speaker, or having participated in a meeting of dedicated Christians, you were captured by an easy enthusiasm and decided to be a true follower of Christ. But did you real-

ly think enough about your decision?

With the first temptation, did you return to the little "gods" of your former life, to the desire for riches, for fame, to the false lights of intellectualism, the rascination of a vigorously promoted atheism, or to materialism? Or perhaps at the first painful trial you did not know how to persevere as Christ asked of you. Or maybe you settled for a superficial existence with little dedication, which is so much like the life of a pagan.

If you have found yourself in one of these, or a similar situation, perhaps it is time for you to reread with a sincere heart and with humility, the words of Jesus:

"And indeed, which of you here, intending to build a tower, would not first sit down and work out the cost to see if you had enough to complete it?"

Yes, you need to think thoroughly about it. You should make your calculations and know what is needed to be a Christian.

Certainly here Jesus did not intend to say that whoever does not feel like bearing the consequences of his choice can forget about them. He, you must not surmise, does not invite those who refuse this undertaking. The encounter with Christ means that we have no other choice, we have no other road to salvation. Jesus said, "He who is not with me is against me" (Luke 11:23).

No. Jesus tells you about the tower to be constructed and about the king who is preparing to go to war, in order to invite you to look with a total awareness at what it means to be a Christian. It means that you have a great ideal in life, one that has to be put before everything else, an ideal in which everything else is centered, and for which you are to live your life: God!

Do you want this Ideal? Say so. And try to be faithful to him, putting him and his word at the place of honor in your heart.

Chiara Lubich

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MUSIC

A conversation with Licia Albanese

On first entering the spacious living room of Licia Albanese, also known as Mrs. Joseph Gimma, we were impressed by the harmonious blend of quiet elegance and rich display of memorabilia, of privacy and the limelight. We were indeed in the world of a lady and of a prima donna. What attracted us first was a beautiful life-size portrait of Miss Albanese in the role of Violetta in Verdi's *La Traviata*, and a multitude of photographs placed on the piano, on tables, consoles all over the room, hanging from the walls, looking at us from all directions. There was Arturo Toscanini with a lovely dedication to Licia Albanese "Mimi, bella quanto brava" ("Mimi," both beautiful and great). There was Beniamino Gigli, who first recommended her to the Metropolitan Opera and was thus responsible for her debut there, there was Ezio Pinza, Rosa Ponselle, Giovanni Martinelli, Maria Jeritza, Giuseppe Di Luca, Bidu Sayao, . . . And then, in the midst of all these artists there is a most respectable array of men of the cloth, all princes of the church — popes, bishops, cardinals — every one of them with a warm, personal dedication and signature. We couldn't help being puzzled, for here we discovered still another dimension of the personality we had come to see, a dimension which fascinated us although we did not find the courage to talk about it, at least not right away.

Licia Albanese, a great star for many years of the Metropolitan Opera, of La Scala, San Francisco, Covent Garden (where she sang for the coronation of King George VI), still has a busy concert schedule along with her activities as a teacher, a judge at voice competitions, as President of the Puccini Foundation, and of course as wife, mother, and gracious hostess. With all this full life, she feels she still owes a return for the great gift she had received, and is determined to go on giving, offering concerts especially for charities — for retarded children, for old people, and for the sick.

But not too far ahead, there is also a big concert event on Miss Albanese's

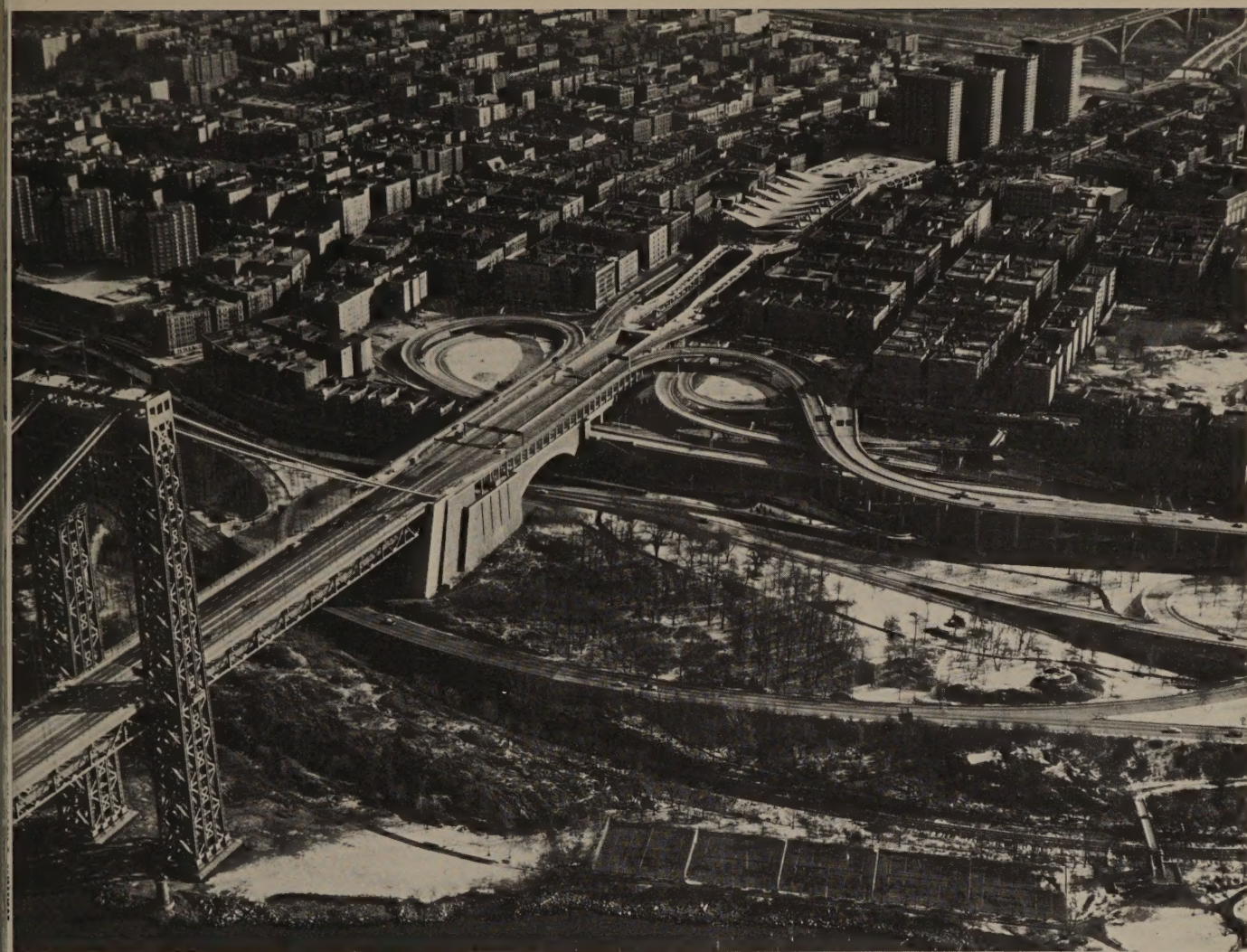
agenda, a gala recital with orchestra at Carnegie Hall, marking her forty year long singing career. "I'm still looking for material to use in my program," she confided to us, "because this time there is not going to be any *Butterfly* or *Boheme* or any of the roles I've been associated with. I want to sing arias I never sang before in New York."

Miss Albanese is as excited about this concert as she may have been at her debut, way back in Parma, the city known for its super critical and demanding public, the opera singers' nightmare even to this day. But for the young girl from Bari, a small town just above the heel of the Italian boot on the Adriatic Sea, neither Parma nor its public could hold anything but the promise of a bright future.

She came from a fairly large family, three brothers and three sisters, and even though there were no professional musicians among them, there was a lot of singing and music-making, "just as in any other family in Southern Italy," according to Miss Albanese. Her mother had a lovely voice, and so did her younger sister who was a fine coloratura but married very young. An older sister was a dramatic soprano and also had the makings of a concert pianist but here, too, marriage put an end to any plans for a musical career.

But Licia, who did not get married until she came to the United States, was already at a very early age singled out by her father as the one destined to go very far. He encouraged her to study seriously, to aim at a career in opera and made her promise to pursue it and never to give up in the face of difficulties. Licia promised, although at that time she'd rather have seen herself as a dancer, doing pirouettes instead of scales and solfeggio. And she still loves to go to the ballet whenever she has a chance.

After her father died, Licia Albanese went to begin her professional studies in Milan, living with relatives. "I was very poor," she reminisced, "I washed all my clothes and even my bed sheets in cold water, and often went to audition on an empty stomach. But I didn't mind. I never felt sorry for myself. I went to sing with great joy, and little by little things started to happen. There came Parma, my debut in *Madame Butterfly* . . . *Butterfly*, by the way, was al-



Licia Albanese came to New York after having made her singing debut in Parma, Italy, the city known for its super critical and demanding public. Here she became a great star for many years at the Metropolitan Opera House.

ways my lucky role, the one I've most been identified with. Wherever I was to sing, I managed to make it *Madame Butterfly*. And since they always asked me back, it either means that the role has brought me luck or that I sang it well. I always loved it. I love most Puccini roles because they are musically lyrical and theatrically dramatic. And I happen to have a lyrical soprano voice and I can be very dramatic on stage, I believe in giving meaning to every word, in bringing out every shade of emotion."

Miss Albanese first approaches a character through the music score. Once the music is fully absorbed, she begins to memorize the words, and only when both music and words are completely mastered does she begin to concentrate on expression. And when Miss Albanese says "studying the score," she means the entire

score. Not just the soprano part, but that of the tenor, of the baritone, of every character in the opera, plus all the symphonic parts as well. And when it comes to studying the character, she likes to go back to the original sources, reading everything that has been written about the character, be it a play as in the case of *La Traviata*, *Fedora*, or *Adriana Lecouvreur*, or a novel as in the case of *Manon* or *La Boheme*. Her love for authenticity went so far as to purchase the original Japanese kimonos of Miss Tamaki Miura, (the first Japanese opera singer who had sung the first Butterfly with Puccini, the composer) and wear them in her own performances at the Met. On a recent trip to Japan a couple of years ago, Miss Albanese visited the tomb of Tamaki Miura, carrying incense and flowers to honor her memory. She also wanted to visit the home of the "real" Madame But-

terfly, but time did not allow her to get as far as Nagasaki.

Licia Albanese sang at the Met, she sang at La Scala, and in many great opera houses in the world, but she never became part of the "jet set" who sing in one country one night and in another country the next. "I could never see the reason for rushing around the world just to make more money. It just never made any sense to me." Nor does she approve of the current trend of having stage directors who know nothing about music dictate to the singers what to do on stage. "Toscanini, the greatest conductor of all times used to say, 'Just follow the music and you'll become actors,'" Miss Albanese recalled. "Every movement, every expression is already there in the music," she added, and she was never happy, therefore, to follow stage directions which were contrary to her own feelings,

(continued from page 27)

and made her feel confined, robbed of her freedom as an artist.

This same freedom she tries to pass on to her students, making them aware of what the composer wants to convey with his music, making them move on stage, pronounce clearly so that every word counts and is understood. When preparing them for concerts, Miss Albanese wants her young singers to be very elegant on stage and learn how to move their hands. "Hands, when properly used, can talk beautifully," she feels. "They must accompany the words. In a way, they are the vehicles we use to 'offer' words and music to the public."

Miss Albanese who can be "a lioness" in class, is also a friend to her students whom she often invites to have tea or coffee with her, and she loves to teach them about life as well: to be modest, to accept sacrifices, not to feel sorry for themselves, to always give with joy no matter how hard the circumstances. "Teaching gives me great joy," she continued, "when I see that my students learn and improve. I expect them to come to class perfectly prepared. After all it does cost them money, even though I do not accept any fee for myself." It all goes into the Puccini foundation, a project Miss Albanese had started with her husband a few years ago. The Puccini Foundation helps young singers who win one of the annual competitions organized for this purpose. The winners receive a grant of \$1500 for voice lessons which they are free to take with any teacher of their choice. So far the Fund has financed three competitions at the San Diego Opera, two in Baltimore, some in Palm Beach, in Newark and all around the United States. The contests, though named after Puccini, are not limited to the Puccini repertoire.

Closer to home, Licia Albanese is a very special, favored person in her neighborhood church, the Church of St. Jean the Baptist where she sings occasionally or organizes concerts for holidays and particular events. "Oh yes, I feel very lucky to have this

beautiful church just a couple of blocks away," she told us as we asked her about it. "The pastor keeps asking me to do something, but now I really can't find the time. Perhaps in September or October we'll have

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another concert. But I do love this church! I go there every day and hate missing even once. But when I have to miss a day because I'm too busy cleaning house, I say to the Lord, 'you see that I'm working. I'm not sitting around sipping coffee or watching television. So you also know that this work is for you.' "

Our face must have betrayed some surprise at hearing that Licia Albanese is cleaning house, for she added, with a smile, "Sure, I believe in doing housework. And I do my own cooking, too. I assure you it doesn't do me any harm. Years ago I used to have a household staff of a maid, a cook, and a nurse for my son, but that was during the height of my career when I traveled a lot and was constantly engaged in rehearsals, performances, recording sessions and all the rest. Now I manage very well with just one person, Jennie, who has been with me for twenty years and who is really a companion to me more than anything else.

"I really have a beautiful life. I have a wonderful husband who shares my love for music and who is kind, generous and thoughtful, not only towards me but towards other people as well. And I have a fine young man for a son. He, too, loves music

and is a pretty good critic of his mother. And I'm happy to be a Catholic, to have this beautiful religion."

At this point we felt we could ask about the many church personalities displayed in the photographs. "Well, yes, I have pictures of popes," she promptly explained, "actually six with the new one, John Paul II. That's the only photo that isn't signed because I haven't met him yet personally. The photo was made from a painting which is now in the Vatican and was given to me by the painter himself, Gaetano Miani, who lives in New York.

"I did meet Paul VI, though, and John XXIII even twice. Once I had my son Joseph with me. He was still a little boy and the Pope put his hands on his head and told him, 'You know, my name is Joseph too.' And before that I met Pius XII and Pius XI. For the latter I sang in 1937 with Gigli in the Sistine Chapel. It was an oratorio, 'That Last Judgement' by Lorenzo Perosi, with an immense orchestra and an immense chorus. It was broadcast over the Vatican Radio to the whole world. I was very young. I had just started to sing at the Rome Opera and it was a great honor to be chosen for this occasion."

It certainly was an honor, but the choice could not have been more appropriate. For the young, clear voice that rose over the Sistine Chapel audience carrying the notes of the oratorio, also carried the fervor and the joyous dedication of a generous, unspoiled heart. And as the years went by, the voice grew in beauty for everyone to hear, and the artistry grew in depth for everyone to see. But the heart, which only One can really see, remains a mystery. Yet, as we bade farewell to Licia Albanese, we had an intuition that the young girl who sang with so much enthusiasm in the early times of her career is basically still the same — with the same joy, the same fervor, the same determination to do things right — and absolutely refusing to feel sorry for herself.

Vera Giannini

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

The Focolare Movement began in 1943, in Italy. Chiara Lubich, with a small group of girls, realized in the midst of the total destruction of World War II, that God is the only one worth living for. Hence they began to place the Gospel in the center of their lives. The testament of Jesus became their Ideal: "That all may be one...that the world may know that you have sent me, and that you have loved them as you have loved me..." (Jn. 17,23). The life lived by these first girls, the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to a form of spirituality proper to the Focolare Movement. It represents a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

The name "Focolarini" takes its origin from the Italian word "fire" and suggests the idea of "carriers of fire."

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They work as other lay men and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini."

THE VOLUNTEERS

The Volunteers, who are also called the "Volunteers of God," would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. For this reason they remain in their jobs and in their professions in order to vivify them with this spirit.

Their aim is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

THE LARGEST MEMBERSHIP

The largest membership of the Movement is made up of men, women, and young people of all social conditions who are free of any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their free and willing acceptance of its spirit. They keep in touch with the Movement and with one another through large or small gatherings, publications, correspondence, and personal contact.

People with other commitments, even those bound to religious institutions, can form part of the Movement too because the Movement exists wherever its spirit is lived. People of non-Christian religions are also counted among the Movement's friends. Also those who owe no allegiance to any faith are often attracted by one or another of the Movement's aspects.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation.

Thousands of young people all over the world have been attracted by the spirituality of unity. Their number continues to grow.

At the core of this large group of youth, are Gen who have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love. The Gen use all possible means to share with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

K-P spirituality

chiara lubich

when did we see you, lord?

The extraordinary dignity of every person, each individual's capacity for the infinite, and the need to discover God in our fellow human beings are some of the recurring themes here. The question, "Who is my neighbor?" is answered in the light of the Old and New Testaments, and in terms of our relationship with other Christians, with members of other religions, and with non-believers. Reflecting on the more than thirty-five years of experience of the Focolare Movement, the author describes how, by loving others, people can move from lives that are meaningless and empty to lives that are full and, in a real sense, divine.

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